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AUTHOR	Healy, Charles C.
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ABSTRACT

The paper is addressed to the problem of how to accomplish evaluation of Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) and its product, i.e. youth. It distinguishes between direct and indirect evaluation of the product and the process. Aspects of PPS which make evaluation difficult, but not impossible are noted: (1) the provision of PPS is partially an art and its specification can only be approached; (2) the product is a dynamic developing person and control and observation are properly limited; and (3) goals are difficult to operationalize. An evaluation paradigm which can be followed by PPS professionals is described and applied, by way of illustration, to a dropout prevention program. (TL)

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Name: Charles C. Healy, Assistant Professor
School of Education, University of California, Los Angeles
405 Hilgard Avenue
Los Angeles, California 90024

Title: Solving the Mystery of Pupil Personnel Services Evaluation

Abstract:

Evaluation of pupil personnel services (PPS) has become a major concern of the guidance profession. Yet, guidance literature reveals little about the concept. This paper complements Scriven's work (1967) in reducing the mystery of evaluation. It distinguishes between direct and indirect evaluation, notes the aspects of PPS which make evaluation difficult, but not impossible, and describes an evaluation paradigm that can be followed by a PPS professional. The application of the paradigm is then illustrated for a dropout prevention program.

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SOLVING THE MYSTERY OF PPS EVALUATION

CHARLES C. HEALY
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES

A new term has entered the PPS dictionary, and like many new terms it is shrouded in mystery. The term is evaluation. Although new to the PPS dictionary, the concept has been known to man from the beginning of language. This paper will clarify evaluation's meaning and application to PPS.

We all know what evaluation is -- the process of judging whether a procedure and its product meet specific criteria. Scriven (1967) has distinguished product evaluation, which he termed summative, and process evaluation, which he termed formative. However, what is new to PPS is not this important distinction, but the growing demand that somehow PPS and its product, our youth, be evaluated. And of course the mystery is how to accomplish such evaluation.

Direct and Indirect Evaluation

Examination of the concept of evaluation quickly suggests two approaches. We can examine the product and process by directly observing and measuring their consistency with our criteria, or we can examine correlates or concommitants of our criteria, thereby indirectly evaluating process and product. For example, direct evaluation of the PPS process would involve determining whether a student received the services pre-

scribed by the PPS plan; that is, were his diagnosed needs the basis of his assignment to the selected services, and did those services operate as programmed? Likewise, direct evaluation of the product would require us to investigate whether our graduate had achieved his PPS objectives; that is, could he now state a career plan? Did he apply his decision-making strategy to career decisions? In contrast, indirect evaluation of PPS process would not involve us in looking at the PPS process directly; instead we would examine the concommitants of an effective process. Is there an adequate counselor-student ratio, and are the counselors credentialed, etc.? Likewise, in indirect evaluation of the PPS product, we would examine the correlates of our criteria -- How many graduates remember their counseling? What percent of graduates are satisfied with their job? What percent have changed jobs?

Both approaches are complementary and should be used in concert. Indirect evaluation allows us to quickly judge whether our criteria are attainable with the existing procedures. Since indirect evaluation allows only a "no" or "maybe" judgment of effectiveness, direct evaluation is necessary to clarify the "maybe."

Traditionally, however, evaluation of PPS has been limited to indirect evaluation. This may have happened because adequate resources for effective PPS were so infrequently available that when a program's resources were found to be adequate, it was considered wasteful to evaluate further. More urgent was the need to stimulate the programs to obtain adequate resources. However, PPS resources have tripled in the last decade; and now it is urgent to pursue direct evaluation of PPS after indirect evaluation indicates a "maybe."

Both direct and indirect evaluation require the specification of criteria; that is, the evaluator must define standards against which he will judge his process or product. Direct evaluation requires that standards be defined by measurable behaviors. Indirect evaluation needs only general descriptive standards, since the correlates of those standards will be scrutinized, not the standards themselves.

After specifying his standards and gathering his feedback, the evaluator judges whether his standards have been achieved. If they were, his job is complete. If they were not achieved, he modifies the operation in accordance with feedback and collects new feedback, modifying and recycling until the standards are achieved.

Judgments about the standards achieved by a PPS program should not be equated with judgments of worth. Judgments of worth are based on the degree of goal achievement and comparisons of the evaluated program with comparable programs. Therefore, knowledge of a program's effectiveness in achieving its goals provides only part of the data needed for judging its worth.

Difficulties of Evaluation

Specification of process and product in PPS have been difficult and controversial tasks. Because provision of PPS is partially an art, its specification can only be approached; because the product is a dynamic, developing person, control and observation of him are properly limited. When PPS researchers attempt evaluation, however, controversy compounds these difficulties. PPS professionals disagree about the importance of different process parameters and goal behaviors and the possibility of operationalizing goals. The difficultyof operationalizing goals is par-

ticularly vexing because inadequate definitions of a goal in observable terms prevent development of the goal. More serious, however, is omitting some goals because they cannot be operationalized easily. Such omissions lead to development of only part of the person. Since the superficial is easier to operationalize, failure to try to operationalize all goals can misdirect PPS into attempting only the superficial.

The multifaceted nature of PPS makes evaluation even more difficult. Ideally, PPS integrates distinct services which serve different needs of different students. Each student receives more or less individualized services, according to his need. Services overlap in varying degrees and it becomes difficult to identify which students received which services. Goals of services also overlap and may sometimes even conflict, further increasing the evaluation problem, while emphasizing the need for evaluation.

In spite of the real difficulties inherent in specifying process and goal parameters, especially in light of its many facets, evaluation of PPS must be undertaken by PPS professionals. Upgrading of the PPS process and product requires evaluation and more and more school boards are demanding it to justify expansion and, of more concern, to justify continuation of PPS. If the PPS profession fails to evaluate its services, others, who are less qualified, are ready to do so.

Steps in Evaluation

I shall not try to resolve the controversies of process and outcome parameters, but rather I shall describe procedures to be followed in making an evaluation, once tentative parameters are accepted. Although specifying criteria and choosing measures of those criteria are difficult tasks,

they are only the first step in the process. I shall describe the rest of the process in the hope that the PPS professional will realize that he can, and must, actively be engaged in evaluation.

Evaluation of a PPS program starts by specifying goals in measurable terms and agreeing on appropriate measures. If evaluation is continuous, the first step, although difficult and controversial, need not be insurmountable, for goals and measures can be deleted, modified, and substituted as feedback is received.

Step 2 consists in arranging for measurement of the goal behaviors. Questions concerning who, when, and where need to be answered in order that the measures be obtained.

In Step 3, we list the obstacles that impede the desired behaviors of Step 1, and define those obstacles in measurable terms. (PPS experience and logic are necessary to accomplish this and subsequent steps.) Procedures for monitoring change in such impeding behaviors should also be established at this stage.

In Step 4, behaviors which will remove the obstacles in Step 3 are listed and procedures are developed for continually monitoring the degree to which such behaviors occur.

In Step 5, the behaviors which will prevent or curtail the Step 4 behaviors are listed and we develop procedures for monitoring their occurrence.

In Step 6, methods of inducing the behaviors of Step 4 are defined in measurable terms, and arrangements for their measurement are made.

Step 7 consists in defining procedures to minimize the behaviors of Step 5 which were thought to be counterproductive.

In Step 8, the system is activated, starting with Step 7 and proceeding to Step 1. The system is then reviewed to insure that feedback data are being provided.

Step 9 consists in collecting data as it becomes available and analyzing their fit to our process and outcome criteria. Analysis should begin before data from all steps are available. Indeed, Step 9 must be ongoing with each new step in the system. Analysis of the immediate data will clarify whether the program's components are operating as specified and whether their inputs are producing the desired results. The plan of data analysis must influence, but not dictate, the type and form of data collected at each step. Statistical knowledge is essential in planning and analysis, in order to maximize the data's usefulness.

In Step 10, all analyses should be summarized and recommendations for improvement should be made. Some improvements in the system will have already been implemented because of the ongoing nature of Step 9. Other improvements, however, may be possible only from hindsight. (All such improvements and recommendations will again require expertise in PPS.) After the first cycle, all recommendations should be implemented and the system recycled.

An illustration of the evaluation schedule's application to a dropout prevention program is presented in Figure 1. The type of behaviors and degree of specification needed for each step in the schedule are indicated for the hypothetical program. The content of Table 1 is abbreviated for purposes of illustration and does not represent an operational dropout prevention program.

Insert Table 1 about here.

Inspection of Table 1 illustrates that there are several points in the process where data are provided which allow the potential effectiveness of the program to be judged before our product completes the program. Since our product is a human being, it is essential that we maximize the success potential of our program. Use of the evaluation schedule presented here permits us to do that. For example, in the dropout prevention program, Table 1, a PPS coordinator can quickly know whether his special programming and incentives have led students to take remedial reading and counseling. If they were not working, he could immediately introduce new strategies for involving the students in his two components, or he could add or substitute other components for removing the obstacle behaviors of Step 3. Of course, knowing that the components of the system are operating and that they are performing according to expectation does not guarantee achievement of the goal, because more components may be needed; however, if we know the system is not operating, or that components are malfunctioning, we know we are not likely to achieve our goal.

TABLE 1

EVALUATION COMPONENTS OF A DROPOUT-PREVENTION PROGRAM

STEP		COMPONENT
1		Increase percentage of entering 10th graders who complete their high school graduation requirements.
2		Semi-annually the computer prints out each student's progress toward graduation. This report is compiled by scanning each student's courses and grades in them.
3	a.	Students drop out because they cannot read high school materials -- that is, they cannot make a 9th grade reading score on a standard reading test. These tests are administered yearly.
	b.	Students drop out because they feel school is irrelevant. They cut excessively and do not participate in class when there. Teacher reports of cutting and non-participation are fed into the computer every grading period, and therein each student is analyzed for dropout potential.
4.	a.	Participation in a remedial reading course equips a high schooler to read at the 9th grade level. Weekly attendance figures and monthly content ratings are provided for such courses.
	b.	Group counseling which focuses on developing one's philosophy of life increases the relevance of school for the dissatisfied. Weekly attendance and monthly content ratings are provided for such groups.

TABLE 1 (cont'd)

EVALUATION COMPONENTS OF A DROPOUT-PREVENTION PROGRAM

STEP		COMPONENT
5	a.	A combination of part time work and extra-curricular activities limit ability to profit from remedial reading.
	b.	Not attending school reduces participation in group counseling. Each student's cutting rate for each grading period is available via computer.
6.	a.	Remedial reading is scheduled at accessible times and places. Remedial reading materials are credible to adolescents and their credibility is rechecked in a yearly survey. Deficient readers are invited to participate in such classes. Others may join.
	b.	There are sufficient counseling groups, and such groups meet at accessible times. This is verified by semi-annual survey. Potential dropouts are invited to participate and others may join.
7.	a.	Activity schedules of students with a reading deficiency are scanned after every grade report. Counselors interview those whose schedules are too heavy.
	b.	Students with high cut rates are invited to attend group counseling even though they cut other school activities. Attendance at group is confidential.

TABLE 1 (cont'd)

EVALUATION COMPONENTS OF A DROPOUT-PREVENTION PROGRAM

STEP	COMPONENT
8.	Remedial reading and group counseling are begun. Director monitors reports from instructors and teachers, and coordinates with school programmer to insure other data are being assembled.
9.	Director immediately determines percentage of deficient readers and potential dropouts participating in his components. He continues to monitor data showing whether reading and counseling are being provided according to plan, whether remedial reading raises reading level, whether this reduces dropping out, etc.
10.	Director summarizes data from first group's experience in going through the system, and in concert with his PPS team proposes modifications, which are immediately implemented for entering group.